

Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services  
**In Support of HB 6633 An Act Concerning Stalking**  
Norah Cleary, Child Advocate, Women & Families Center  
Judiciary Committee, March 30, 2011

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Norah Cleary and I am a Counselor/Advocate for Women & Families Center, a member agency of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is a statewide coalition of individual rape crisis programs which are dedicated to ending sexual violence through victim assistance, community education and public advocacy. We ask that you join with us to support HB 6633, *An Act Concerning Stalking*.

CONNSACS strongly supports HB 6633 because it addresses both the limitations of the current law and creates guidelines for courts to assess conduct which could be defined as stalking. Specifically, HB 6633 would expand the definition of stalking in the first degree to include past offenses. What domestic and sexual violence counselors have learned through our direct service roles is that the intrinsic nature of stalking is both insidious and chronic. Additionally, the new bill expands the intent requirement for stalking in the second degree. The current intent requirement is problematic for many reasons, due mostly to its sole focus on *physical* safety of the victim. Further, HB 6633 will expand the definitions of third degree stalking to include reasonable fears beyond *personal physical safety*. Regardless of a stalker's intent, his or her repetitive behavior can result in real fear for the safety of a third party, a pet or the victim's personal property.

According to a 2006 report by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), 3.4 million people report being stalked in the United States every year. This same report concluded that "technology has become a quick and easy way for stalkers to monitor and harass their victims." In the five years that have passed since this report was written, the ubiquity of personal technological devices, spyware and individuals' online presences have skyrocketed. Connecticut's stalking laws have not been updated since 1992. HB 6633 has the potential to address the issue of cyberstalking by illuminating the true goal of stalkers: fomenting terror in the intended victim.

Stalking is inextricably linked to interpersonal and sexual violence. It is a criminal offense by which abusers seek to control their victims and is a part of virtually every domestic violence story ever told. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), intimate partners committed 30% of homicides for females. This is an epidemic. HB 6633 is necessary for the citizens of Connecticut.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

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